Research finds different brain waves in gay men

Study's findings add to debate on trait's origin

Associated Press

DENVER — Brains of homosexual males are stimulated by sound differently than those of heterosexual men, indicating genetic and biological differences, a psychiatrist said Thursday.

Dr. Martin Reite, professor of psychiatry at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, said the findings are based on a study of 17 adult males.

An earlier study by a group of National Cancer Institute researchers, announced July 16, found evidence supporting the theory that the tendency to be gay may be inherited.

Dean Hamer, principal author of that study, said his research does not prove sexual orientation is compelled genetically but does indicate sexual orientation is powerfully influenced by inherited genes.

Reite reported his findings to an annual meeting of the Society for Neurosciences in Washington, D.C.

The 17 men were divided into groups of nine heterosexuals and eight homosexuals. Brain function was mapped through magnetoencephalography, a noninvasive method of recording magnetic fields of brain activity while tones were delivered through an earphone.

Reite said brain waves of the heterosexuals were asymmetrical, with processing sites in the right hemisphere being further forward than those in the left hemisphere.

Past studies had shown that heterosexual women process such stimulation symmetrically in both the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

Brains of homosexual males processed the sound stimulations somewhere between heterosexual males and heterosexual females, the study found.

"This indicates there are genetic and biological differences in the brain that correlate to sexual orientation," Reite said.

It is unclear at what point during development the difference becomes apparent, whether prenatally or, for example, during puberty, he said.

Reite said he hopes to continue the research in Denver to include homosexual women.

Hamer's research found a common genetic pattern for homosexuality in a part of the X chromosome in 33 of 40 gay brothers.

Three other experiments in recent years have found possible biological explanations for sexual orientation.

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members that a year after voters agreed to spend lottery money differently, not a single penny has been redirected. So, before the board spends several more months on long-range policy making, it decided to pick a handful of projects by January and spend some of the money.

"What we're talking about is a very pragmatic strategy to get some money out right away," said board member Jane Ragle of Colorado Springs. The strategy could attract quick support for Great Outdoors, while helping to defuse some discontent among legislators, who have never liked the idea of having $35 million worth of spending decisions stripped away.

The board expects to have a list of worthy projects ready for public comment in December and will make its first spending decisions in January.

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